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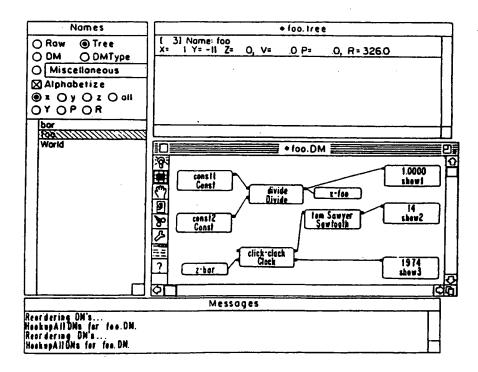
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- (71) Applicant: VPL RESEARCH, INC. [US/US]; 656 Bair Island Road, Suite 304, Redwood City, CA 94063 (US).
- (72) Inventors: LANIER, Jaron, Z.; 420 Jacobs Court, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (US). LASKO-HARVILL, Ann; 1784 Hamlet Street, San Maeto, CA 94403 (US). BLAN-CHARD, Chuck, L.; 1035 Paradise Way, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (US). SPARKS, Joe, L.; 181 Downey, San Francisco, CA 94117 (US).
- (74) Agent: DELAND, James, A.; Townsend and Townsend, One Market Plaza, 2000 Steuart Tower, San Francisco, CA 94105 (US).
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(54) Title: IMPROVED METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CREATING VIRTUAL WORLDS



(57) Abstract

A computer display displays a data flow network as a plurality of interconnected units. An interactive program allows the appearance of the plurality of interconnected units to be changed. The data flow network then is automatically altered to correspond with the visual changes.

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⁺ Any designation of "SU" has effect in the Russian Federation. It is not yet kn wn whether any such designation has effect in other States of the former Soviet Union.

IMPROVED METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR CREATING VIRTUAL WORLDS

5 BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to virtual reality systems and, more particularly, to a method and apparatus for creating a virtual world.

Users of computer systems are now able to create virtual realities which they may view and interact with. 10 One type of virtual reality system is disclosed in U.S. patent application No. 535,253, filed June 7, 1990, entitled "Virtual Reality Network," the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference. One task which must be performed is the creation of the virtual worlds within which 15 the users interact. This can be a very tedious task, since a complete description of all virtual objects in the virtual world, including their constraints of motion, hierarchy, color, texture and other attributes must be made and entered into the virtual reality computer. Thus, it is desirable to 20 make virtual world creation as simple as possible.

One product used to create virtual worlds is the "Body Electric" program discussed in the above-identified patent application. The Body Electric program allows the user to create virtual world hierarchy trees and to couple data (real world or synthesized) to the tree nodes. Further details of the program maybe found in Appendix 1.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to an improved method and apparatus for creating virtual worlds wherein users may manipulate pictorial objects on a computer screen to effect complicated operations on the virtual world database. In one embodiment of the present invention, a computer display displays a data flow network as a plurality of interconnected units. An interactive program allows the appearance of the plurality of interconnected units to be

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a diagram of a display screen which incorporates f atures according to the present invention; and

Fig. 2 is a diagram of a display screen which incorporates interprocessor communication features according to the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE APPENDICES

Appendix 1 is a text description of the operation of a program that is used for creating virtual world databases;

Appendix 2 is a listing of numerous examples of virtual worlds created with the present invention;

Appendix 3 is a source code listing of "Body Electric" software which incorporates features of the present invention; and

Appendix 4 is a source code listing of an interprocessor editor according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF SPECIFIC EMBODIMENTS

25 Fig. 1 is a diagram showing a computer display showing features of the present invention. It should be referred to in the discussion which follows.

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The Names Window

The introduction of the Names window is one of the most fundamental changes of Body Electric 2.7b3. This window replaces many of the functions that the DM dialog box originally performed.

It might be useful to have Body Electric running while reading this. Just start up BE 2.7b3 and open a 'New' file (from the <u>File</u> menu). Body Electric will ask you if you want to create a Tree or DM file. Choose DM.

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The "Type" List.

raw	фm	alpha
tree	type	

Below is the Names Window with the 'type' box selected. This window is invoked by selecting "Names" from the Window menu.

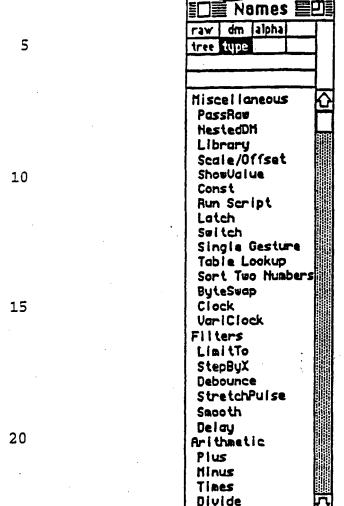
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The names you will see in this list are the DM types that can be used. In order to create a DM of any of these types, simply click on the name of the DM type you desire (without releasing the mouse button) and drag the DM onto a selected DM file window. Note that the DM file window should be selected (and not the Names window).

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The "Raw" List

raw	фn	alpha	
tree	tupe		

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A listing of available raw inputs will appear when this box is checked. A raw input can be connected to a DM in a selected DM window by doing

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basically the same process as was done to drag the DM out. Click down on the raw input you need and drag it close to the DM input (on the left side of the DM) that you wish to connect it to. When the raw input is within connecting distance, the input box it is closest to will light up. By releasing the mouse button, the raw input should connect itself to the DM. Another method of connecting a raw input to a DM is to click down on the DM input and then select the raw input needed. When the mouse button is released, the connection should be inade.

The "Tree" List

raw	dm	alpha	
tree	tupe		
×	y	Z	
1124	nitch	rall	

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When the tree box is selected, a listing of the tree nodes from the Swivel file that is activated will appear. The tree file below is from one of VPL's worlds named "Kitchen". Tree node inputs and outputs can be connected to DM's in the same fashion as raw inputs are. One thing that is slightly different is that when using tree nodes as inputs or outputs, the user must

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degrees of freedom are x, y, z, yaw, pitch, and roll. (see also "The Lower Six Options.")

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Names 1 dm lalpha tree tupe Ų yaw pit h roll ClockHall ClockFace Sound2 90Clock 60Clock 30Clock ClockTwelvel ClockTwelve2 SecondHand MinuteHand HourHand Countertop CounterBaseboard Sink HotGrab HotGrab_bounds_ HotGrab_min_ HotGrab_max_ ColdGrab ColdGrab_bounds_ ColdGrab_min_ ColdGrab_sax_ Faucet FlowingHater Sound4

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The "alpha" Selection

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dm slphs

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When checked, this box makes the selected listing appear in alphabetical order. Sometimes this is advantageous. When looking for a specific DM it can be very useful to be able to find it alphabetically. Other times an alphabetical listing can be confusing. For example, if you were trying to see the tree structure of a world, alpha would prevent you from seeing this structure.

The "dm" Listing

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raw	dm	alpha
tree	tupe	
1	2	3
4	5	6

Highlighting the dm box will show a list of the DM's that are in the active DM file. When you create a DM and name it, it will appear in this menu. With 'dm' comes the numbers 1 through 6 in the lower half of the names menu section (see above).

The dm menu item is useful as a time saver. Instead of searching through your file for a DM, you can find it here and use it as an input or output. Just select the in or out port (1-6) that you wish to use and then use this list like you would use the "raw" and "tree" lists.

The Lower Six Options

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' X	y	Z
WED	pitch	roll

	_ 2	3
4	5	6

The six bottom boxes in the Names Window menu are modifiers. Modifiers appear in three cases: with the Tree, Type, and DM lists. These modifiers specify either the degree of freedom or the number of the input depending on the list chosen. For example, when creating a set of DM's that will move an object in VR, Body Electric usually needs to know what axis of the object should move. Do you want the object to move along the x axis, or do you want it to roll? In order to use the correct "axis" of an object, select x, y, z, yaw, pitch, or roll before "grabbing" the desired node. In the same way, choose the number of the input or output you are using.

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The "Flex" Window

Body Electric 2.7b3 now allows the user to have more than one window open at a time. Because of this, the menu items "Flex" and "Tree" from the <u>Windows</u> menu no longer exist. In place of this, Body Electric now lists the names of the files that are open. To open a DM file (what used to be opened by "Flex" in the Windows menu) called *name*, choose name.DM. To open a tree file (or the Swivel file), choose name.

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Windows

Stack Windor Tile Windo Close All U

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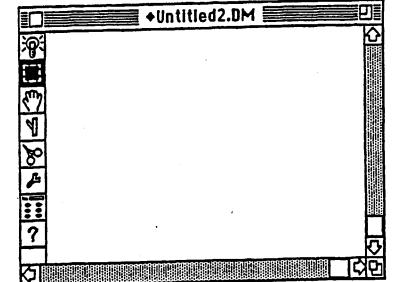
Body Electric must know which tree and DM file to run at any point in time. Because multiple files may be open simultaneously, the user must alert Body Electric to which set of files are being used. That is, the user must make sure that the files being worked on are "Activated". To do this, open the window to be activated. With this window selected, choose "Activate" from the Windows menu.

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In order to check whether a file is activated or not, look in the <u>Windows</u> menu. Files that are active have solid diamonds to the left of their name. Libraries and Nested DM's that belong to activated files have hollow diamonds next to their names.

BE Workbench Tools

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This is a picture of a new DM window. On the left hand side of the DM window are 6 tools. From top to bottom they are named the Select tool, the Hand tool, the On/Off Switch tool, the Calibrate tool (it's a wrench), the Input/Output tool, and the DM description tool.



The Select tool is the default tool for DM windows. It operates in the same fashion as the standard Macintosh arrow. To select a single box, click on it. To select several DM's in the same area, pull a box out around the desired boxes. To select more than one DM one by one, hold down the shift button while clicking on the desired DM's.

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With the Hand tool, the user can "grab" the workspace within the DM window and slide it around like a sheet of paper on a desk. This is an alternative to using the scroll bars.

A]

The On/Off Switch tool allows the user to turn DM's on or off very quickly. There are two ways of using this tool. One way is to select the On/Off tool and then click on the DM that needs to be turned on or off. Another way allows the user to turn on or off multiple DM's simultaneously. First select the DM's you want to change (see the Select Tool). Then hold down the mouse button on the On/Off tool until it starts blinking. When you release the mouse button, the selected DM's will either be turned on or off.

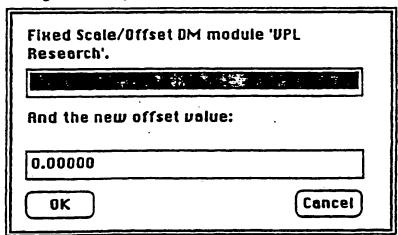
80

The Scissors tool, is used to break connections that already exist between DM's and other DM's, Tree or Raw inputs. To use this tool select it and then click on the input pad you want to disconnect. The input that's going into that tab will be disconnected and the tab will go to it's default if it has a default or if not the DM will be turned off.

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The Wrench, or Calibrate tool, is used to set the internal information of a DM. For example, when calibrated, the Scale/Offset DM presents the dialog box below. Not all DM's have calibration boxes (e.g., 3Times, Average Two, Cube)

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> The Input/Output Tool lets the user modify the number and type of inputs and outputs for each DM. To use it, select this tool and click on

is from the DM Scale/Offset).

5			
	Scale/Offset	□ DMLines	☐ Display
·	Name:		□ 0n
10	undefined	Int	eger
		<u> </u>	
		<u> </u>	
15			
20	outX = inX + const sc	ale + const offset.	
		OK	Cancel
25			

As you can see, this is also the dialog box in which you can name a DM. With the DMLines box checked lines are drawn from the inputs of this DM to the outputs of other DM's. This is the default.

The Display check box

When the On box is checked, the DM is on (i.e., it is being looked at by Body Electric).

The twelve boxes (just below the name box) control how many inputs and the outputs the DM will have, as well as what type each input and output will be. Say for example that you want to have 3 inputs on a Scale/Offset

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DM of type Integer. To do this, click down on the third box down in the left most column. The following menu will appear.

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unused
Integer
Long
Fixed
Real
Point
Same
PointList
undefined

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By selecting "Integer" and releasing the mouse button, the integer inputs will now appear both in the dialog box as well as on the DM itself. The same method can be used to change the type and number of the outputs.

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Note that by changing the inputs of a DM, the outputs usually are altered automatically based upon the DM being worked on.

And finally, the bottom-most box contains a description of the DM.

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By selecting the DM Description Tool and clicking on a DM, a description of the DM will appear across the top of the window. This box describes what the DM does. It is useful for finding out what a DM does as well as for double-checking what any specific input is used for.

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Libraries and Nested DM's.

Nested DM's are DM networks that exists inside other DM networks. When the outer network executes, it calls the Nested DM which executes it's network, and if it in turn has Nested DM's inside it they are called etc. This hierarchical descent occurs to as many levels as necessary. Each Nested DM has one input which determines if the Nested DM will be fired at all and up to 5 other inputs which are passed to the DM network inside the Nested DM. The Nested DM can have up to 6 outputs that are passed from the network to the Nested DM.

The Library DM is a special case of a Nested DM. In this case the DM network exists inside another DM file. This allows you to have functions that are shared amongst different worlds. They can be added to any world by creating a Library DM that refers to the desired library file. This DM was created to allow the user to include common and/or general Data Massage Modules into her or his program without too much grief. This DM has been created in the spirit of standard programming libraries such as the ones in C.

Additional Features

Find Dialog Box; 'This dialog box has a new checkbox called 'Global Search.' When it is unchecked all searches will be in the Tree or DM window you are currently editing. When it is checked the search will be conducted over all the currently opened files and for DM's all the nested DM's in the files.

Mouse Active; There is a new menu item called Mouse Active under the DA menu. By default this comes up checked. When you uncheck it the mouse and keyboard items in the Raw Data Array become inactive. That way you can use them as inputs to a DM network for testing. When you want to work on the network uncheck Mouse Active and your network won't react to mouse movements as you are editing.

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Swivel IPC Specifications Brief Description The Swivel IPC (Inter-Process Comunications) has been designed to allow external editors access to Swivel3D worlds 5 while Swivel is running. With it we have the ability to come up with new ways of creating and editing 3D solid objects. Swivel can always draw any object as a list of polygons. But to edit an object Swivel looks at the objects type. If it is a standard swivel lathe object swivel calls it's internal editor but if it is another object type swivel tries to 10 launch the associated editor and passes a message to edit the given object. When you launch Swivel under Multifinder it runs as one application (program). Under MultiFinder there can be a number of applications launched at the same time. When the user tells swivel to edit an object which uses another editor swivel looks up the name of the editor 15 application and tries to launch that. If successful swivel posts a message in the SwivlPC for that editor which tells the editor to edit the object. The editor edits the object 20 and then posts a message back to swivel to check the object back in. Swivel reads the object back in and updates it's database of objects. The way messages are passed is through a resource called 'YPJK', 0 which is in the system file and is accessible to 25 all applications. This resource doesn't normally exist so the first time SwivlPC is used the resource has to be added to the system. Since any application can access the message passing resource we wanted a way to protect our rights to the technology. 30 Swivel will ignore messages from any editor until the editor has "registered". This gets reset each time swivel runs. "Registering" means that the editor has to send a register message with a pointer to the string "Unauthorized use is subject to legal action." Until the editor does this swivel 35 will ignore any messages from the editor. Message passing scenario User double-clicks on a object that is edited by the terrain editor (#67). Swivel tries to find and launch 'Terrain Editor'. Swivel 40 also post a message to number 67 saying edit the object at location \$xxxxx. The Terrain Editor starts running and looks in the system resource for messages. It sees that there is a message from swivel to it to edit an object. It sends the registration 45 message back to swivel and brings up a window so the user can edit the object. When the user is done and has clicked OK the terrain editor sends a message back to swivel to check in the object the user has edited. 50 Swivel receives the message and replaces the old copy of the object with the newly edited object. The terrain editor can at this point either quit or hang around waiting for some more messages from swivel. Possible Messages 55 MsCheckIn Check an object into swivel that has been edited by an Data, DataLen - Handle to and length of memory in the editor for the new object. 60 modifiers: MsCheckOut

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MsEditObj MsGetCrntObj

	► MsRegisterEd
10	▶ message format
20	▶ 'C' structure definition for System Resource 'YPJK',0.
	► typedef struct {
	short whomto: / whom is the message for /
	short whomfrm; / whom is the message from /
15	short whomfrm; / whom is the message from / short status; / IPC status. Sending, received or
	error /
	short messcount; / Unique incrementing message
•	number /
	short what;
20	short modifier; / Modifier to the what field. / long when; / TickCount when the message was sent, /
•	
	long Date; / Used by Individual messages however they
	want. /
	long DataLen;
25	<pre>} SwivlPC, *SwivlPCPtr, **SwivlPCHandle; whomto is the number of the editor or swivel the message is</pre>
	for. This is an arbitrary 16 bit number which is unique for
	each editor. Swivel is #1.
	m
20	to all editors. Each editor should read the message but
30	not change the status. That wal all the current editors
	can see the message. Broadcast messages will last for 10
	seconds. Then anyone reading the message must set it's
	status to 0 thereby stopping the message.
35	whomfrm is the same as whomto but it's whom the message is
3.5	from
	status - The current state of the message passing mechanism.
•	It is either:
	▶ 0 - not being used
40	▶ 1 - message has been sent and not received.
	Any other number - The sendee has posted an error. Using the macintosh error conventions the errors posted should
	be negative but any number other than 0 or 1 is considered
4.5	<pre>an error. • messcount - Used to keep track of the number of messages</pre>
45 .	posted. Each time a message is posted this value is
	incremented.
	<pre>what - The message verb. See above.</pre>
	modifier - meaning dependant on the what field.
50	when . When the message was posted in Macintpsh System Ticks.
J 0	Data - meaning dependent on the what field.
	DataLen - meaning dependent on the waht field.

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The purpose of the Swivel PC is to allow the Swivel interface to be customized and extended for specific purposes. Many different editor extensions are possible. The one implemented in the code provided in Appendix 4 is called the Orientation Editor.

The Orientation Editor allows those aspects of the Swivel file used by Body Electric for the RB2 Virtual Reality System to be edited and stored within the Swivel file. These aspects include point attributes like bound, cube, line, LineDown, or Line Right, which determine how the point is rendered in Body Electric, as well as enabling particular degrees of freedom (Roll, Pitch, Yaw, X, Y or Z) to be output serially to another [host] computer. The Orientation Editor also allows the user to send command scripts to Swivel, to check all the names of objects in the Swivel file for uniqueness, to inherit selected attributes, and to mark, and return to world viewpoints. These capabilities enhance the user's ability to create Swivel Models for use in RB2.

TRhe improved Body Electric software described may be used for creating a number of virtual worlds. Examples of such virtual worlds are shown in Appendix 2.

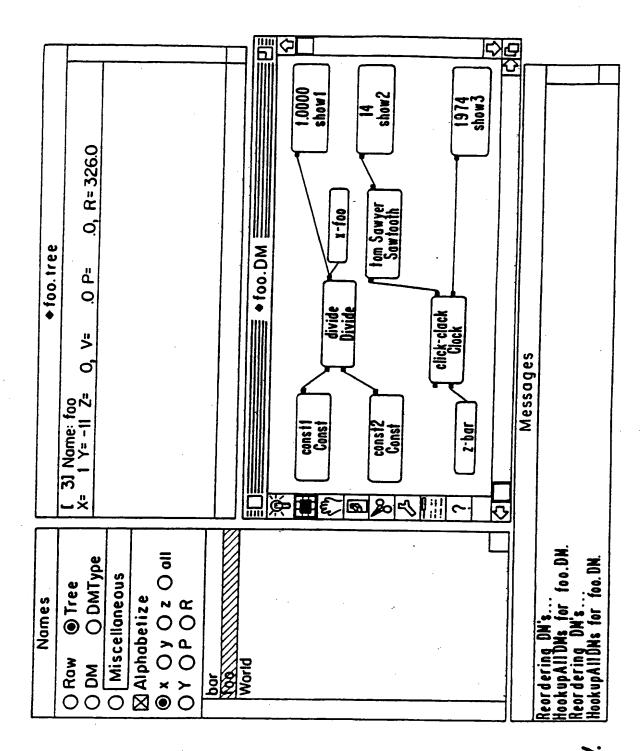
While the above is a complete description of a preferred embodiment of the present invention, various modifications may be employed. Consequently, the scope of the invention should not be limited except as described in the claims.

comprising:

display means for displaying a data flow network as a plurality of interconnected units;

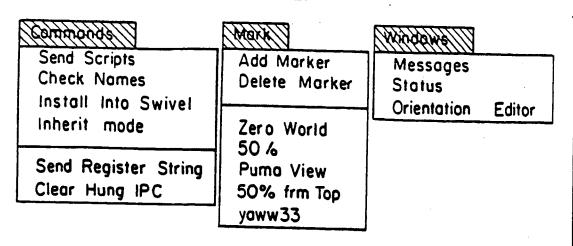
means f r altering the appearance of the plurality of interconnected units on the display; and

means for automatically altering the data flow 10 network to correspond to the altered appearance of the plurality of interconnected units.



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-4-			Orient	otion Editor		<u></u>
* & C C D		Name:			Object 3.	
6		Scale:	100.000 Edit	or: O		
喜		ì	ock value	min	max	
	•	X: [-1.819	-1000.000	1000.000	
P		Y: [-1.153	-1000.000	1000.000	
		Z: [0.000	-1000.000	1000.000	
6 0		Yaw: [116.000	- 180.000	180.000	
		Pitch:	0.000	- 180.000	180.000	·
		Roll:	31.000	-180.000	180.000	
♦		□ bound] point □ line] x □ y □ z		R
<u> </u>		UD	LR	Send	OK Canc	el
						

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No.

PCT/US91/08948

I. CLAS	SIFICATI N OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all) 4	
A COPO	(5): GOGF 3/03	
US	CL: 395/12, 395/922	
II FIELD	DS SEARCHED	
<u> </u>	Minimum Documentation Searched 7	
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U.S	. 395/12,140,157,922	
	Occumentation Searched other than Minimum Occumentation	
	to the Extent that such Documents are included in the Fields Searched	
	JMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT .	·
Category *	Citation of Occument, 11 with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages 12	Relevant to Claim No. 13
		Newvant to Claim No. 15
X	US, A, 4,914,568 (KODOSKY ET AL.) 03 APRIL 1990 See figs. 57,70 and 76-82.	1
. Х	US, A, 4,860,204 (GERDRON ET AL.) 22 AUGUST 1989 See figs. 16-17, 19-20, 28-35, and 45.	1
X	US, A, 4,831,580 (YAMADA) 16 MAY 1989 See figs. 8, 11 and 19-20.	1
Α	US, A, 4,546,435 (HERBERT ET AL.) 08 OCTOBER 1985 See figs. 4-14.	1
Х	US, A, 4,315,315 (KOSSIAKOFF) 01 FEBRUARY 1982 See figs. 2, 5a-6d and 10.	1
A	IFEE Computer, Volume 18, no. 8, 1989 August Los Alamitos, California, Melamed et al., 'Visual Simulation: The Performance Analysis Workstation', see pages 87-94.	1
"A" doct	categories of cited documents: 10 If later document published after the imment defining the general state of the art which is not credit to be of particular relevance. If later document published after the principle cited to understand the principle ovention.	it with the application but or theory underlying the
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ISA/U	RICHARD ELLIS	

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Category *	Citation of Document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	! Relevant to Claim No
A	IEEE Computer, Volume 18, no. 8, 1985 August, Los Alamitos, California, Shu, "FORMAL: A Forms- Oriented, Visual-Directed Application Development System", see pages 38-49.	1
A	TEFE Computer, Volume 18, no. 8, 1985 August, Los Alamitos, California, Jacob, 'A State Transition' Diagram Language for Visual Programming', see pages 51-59.	1
A	IEEE Computer, Volume 17, no. 11, 1984 November Los Alamitos, California, Glinert et al., 'Piot: An Interactive Graphical Programming Environment', see pages 2-25.	
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V OBSERVATIONS WHERE CERTAIN C	LAIMS WERE FOUND UNSEARCHABLE	1
This international search report has not been estab		
Claim numbers because they relate to	p subject matter 12 not required to be searched	IP 17(2) (a) for the following reasons:
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2. Claim numbers . because they relate to	parts of the international application that do r	
ments to such an extent that no meaningful in	ternational sparch can be carried out 13, specif	lot comply with the prescribed require-
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J. Claim numbers	CONTACT CLASSES for draited in accordance with the	
PCT Rule 6.4(a).	spendent claims not drafted in accordance with th	e second and third sentences of
VI. OSSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF IN	VENTION IS LACKING.	
This international Searching Authority found multiple	inventions in this international application as	follows:
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As all required additional search took was timely	n and bush and bush	
 As all required additional search fees were timely of the international application. 	y paid by the applicant, this international searc	h report covers all searchable claims
2. As only some of the required additional search	fees were timely paid by the applicant, this int	armational peaceb record service and
those claims of the international application for	which less were paid, specifically claims:	one desired regard covers and
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. No required additional search fees were timely pi the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is o	and by the applicant. Consequently, this interni	ational search report is restricted to
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As all searchable claims could be searched without the payment of any additional less	ut effort justifying an additional fac. the inter-	Intropol Secretary Authority
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